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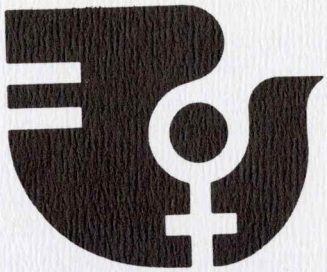
INSTITUT SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE

United Nations
Decade for Women
1976-1985



Nations Unies
Décennie pour la femme
1976-1985

INSIDE: NAIROBI RE-VISITED

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The Newsletter welcomes submission of announcements, articles and other relevent material of interest. Manuscripts must by typed and double-spaced. Drawings, designs or cartoons must be in black and white. Enclose self-addressed stamped envelope with any material that is to be returned. The collective reserves the right to edit material however, it will respect the author's style and take care to retain the author's exact meaning.

Readers are welcomed to write letters for publication. Please include your full name, address and if possible, your telephone number. We will withold your name upon request.

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Views expressed in this Newsletter are that of the individual authors and not necessarily shared by the Institute

guest editorial

by Madeleine Parent

AN ATTEMPT TO DISMANTLE SOCIAL BENEFITS PIECE BY PIECE

In June 1985 senior citizens mounted a public protest against the Ottawa government's plan to cut back old-age pensions by deindexing the first 3% cost-of-living increases that occur from year to year.

Women being the majority of the elderly poor, stood to suffer most from the declining value of pensions.

Senior citizens' petitions, letters, telegrams and visits to the Prime Minister and to MPs' home ridings, delegations and marches on Parliament Hill were so persistent and won such wide support that Mr. Mulroney finally withdrew government plans to cut back the value of pensions. The senior citizens' campaign was an important people's victory.

But in September 1985, the federal government tabled in the House of Commons Bill C-70 that would cut back the value of family allowances by de-indexing them, as it tried to do with pensions.

This time the operation is more subtle: it is tied into a deceptive package, labelled "Family allowances, tax exemptions and tax credits for families with children". It is all very confusing. We are told the reduction is so small, we have no cause to complain. But this new, complicated package is not as good as it seems. The net effect will be that families with two children will lose $1,000. per year by 1990. The real objective is to reduce the value of social benefits year by year.

Since family allowance cheques are mostly mailed to mothers, many of whom receive no other money over which they have control, women again will suffer most from this erosion of social benefits.

Besides, as consumers, women also suffer from the recent extension of sales taxes to hygienic and other drug-store products.

The federal government has also appointed a committee to review the Unemployment Insurance Act: among U.I. benefits up for critical study are paid pregnancy benefits.

If the government succeeds in cutting back the above social programs, one can expect future attempts to reduce medicare coverage and services. Free trade negotiations with the USA, in which country production costs are lower, partly because medicare is a private business there, will surely force a review of Canada's public health costs on the grounds that we must be competitive.

How can Ottawa claim to be concerned about the public debt when: (1) it has spent over $1 billion to increase the revenues of oil corporations; (2) it is spending about $1 billion to compensate depositors of two western banks, including wealthy, uninsured investors; (3) it showers tax give-aways amounting to tens of billions of dollars on large corporations?

Today, women are organizing to protect the universality of Canada's social programs. The Quebec Women's Coalition for Family Allowances has called on all concerned women and men to send letters, telegrams and petitions to Prime Minister Mulroney, urging him to withdraw Bill C-70 that would reduce the value of family allowances. Letters, phone calls or visits to local MPs and delegations on Parliament Hill are needed for success. The Women's Coalition deserves support.

Women cannot make progress if social benefits already won are lost again. It is high time to remindMr. Mulroney in his own words, that social programs are "a sacred trust".

****

Madeleine Parent is the Quebec representative of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC)

letters....

June 13, 1985

Dear Laila,

You know that, after reading the first number of volume 5 of the Institute Newsletter, I was impressed by the new format. After looking at the second number, I feel impelled to put that in writing for you.

The appearance is now much more professional. It is easier to handle and to carry around. I am particularly pleased, however, to see the effort that has been made to publish recent feminist news as well as personal opinions, book and film reviews, etc., thereby making the Newsletter very lively reading. All this on a non-existent budget!

I hope that you - and Lucie - will keep up your good work and continue to improve the publication.

Congratulations so far!

Mair V.

Mair Verthuy
Assoc. Professor
French Department

Montréal, septembre, 1985

Aux: Mmes Lucie Lequin et Laila Dhanani
Editrices du Bulletin de l'Institut
Simone de Beauvoir

Chéres éditrices,

J'aimerais par la présente vous féliciter pour votre excellent travail. Les deux derniers numéros (vol. 5, no 1 et 2) m'ont particuliérement plu: Ils reflétaient, la diversité et la richesse de la théorie/pratique, féministe actuelle. Longue vie au Bulletin!

Féministement vôtre,

Linda Cormier
Montreal, Quebec

TWO NEW FACES AT THE SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR INSTITUTE

GAIL VALASKAKIS & LIBBY GARDHAM

by Deborah Sheppard

This fall we are pleased to welcome to the Simone de Beauvoir Institute two women who bring with them an abundance of energy, ability and enthusiasm. GAIL VALASKAKIS, Vice-Dean, Academic Planning, Arts and Science, is serving as Trustee of the Institute until a new Principal has been found. Gail has just begun her first year of a three-year term as Vice-Dean, as well as her responsibilities as Trustee. She has been in the Department of Communications Studies since 1967, serving as Chairperson and as director of its MA programme. She is currently the President of the Canadian Communication Association and has served as an advisor to UNESCO.

Gail's research interests have focused on communications issues in the Canadian north and the relationship of the media to economic development and social and cultural change in the Third World and the native world. These areas include a concern with issues faced by native women. Prior to the establishment of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Gail taught a section on native women in the advanced women's studies seminar. She has been involved with a number of native groups, serving on the board of directors of the Native Friendship Centre in Montreal for eight years, and as a volunteer with the Native Sisterhood in Kingston Penitentiary for Women. She attended a conference on native women's rights held three years ago in Kingston Penitentiary, the first time a women's conference had ever been held in a women's prison.

For Gail, the motto for the Institute is "business as usual. We should be as active as we've always been," she feels, while the search committee is formed and a new Principal selected. With her own history of community involvement, Gail does not see a contradiction or dichotomy between academic commitments and community action. "It is up to the students and Fellows to provide a sense of direction for the Institute. I see the Simone de Beauvoir Institute as a strong and enduring aspect of Concordia and of Montreal community life."

ELIZABETH GARDHAM comes to the Simone de Beauvoir Institute from the former office of the Vice Rector, Academic (Commerce, Engineering, Fine Arts), where she had been administrative assistant. She first began working at Concordia in 1966 as secretary to the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, and eventually moved into university administration. In addition to working at Concordia, Libby has been studying, slowly but steadily accumulating credits at the rate of six a year with eighteen left to go. A single parent for the past twenty-two years, Libby began her BA in 1967 when her youngest of three children began first grade. She began as a major in sociology with a minor in women's studies, and has since changed her concentration to management. In fact, she is currently taking a course on supervisory practices with one of our Fellows, Linda Dyer.

Since coming to the Institute at the end of July, Libby has been a regular nine to five presence. According to Gail, this has been important for the Institute: "Libby knows the University system. That's a real benefit for us, and she's been doing a great job." When Libby first started, all the names, faces and procedures were new. "It was mind boggling at first. With each piece of paper I had to ask, what usually happens? Jo's been great and very helpful when I've needed advice, as have Laila and Françoise."

Like the rest of us, Libby has been concerned with the recent freezes and cuts. "I'd like to get a feel for what the other colleges have budgeted. I'm concerned with the financial situation in the university and any implications for the Simone de Beauvoir Institute." But despite these concerns, Libby is enthusiastic about the Institute's potential. "The talent, intellect, creativity and dedication are all here. If there is any college in the university that should take off like a rocket, it's the Simone de Beauvoir Institute. I'm happy to be here and look forward to a productive year."

Gail and Libby, welcome to the Simone de Beauvoir Institute - we're glad you're here!●

THE WORK ROLE FINALLY ACHIEVES STAR STATUS

by Nairn Scott-Friemann

We all know how important our jobs are to us - right? Afterall, it is basic economics. We supply our labour in exchange for money, so that we can pay for goods and services we consume and the investments we may choose to undertake. But we shortchange ourselves if we appraise the value of our jobs exclusively in terms of dollars and cents. Admittedly, most women work to satisfy an essential economic need. However, recent studies have confirmed what many women have known all along. And that is, that in the daily stage direction of the various roles in a woman's repertoire, the work role can no longer be overlooked as a bit player, a supporting role noted only for some peripheral contribution. The true merits of the work role are finally winning the recognition they justly deserve. The press coverage applauds the performance of the work role as being absolutely CENTRAL to a woman's overall well-being!

Humanistic psychologists believe that human beings are innately motivated to seek the fullest possible development of their own individual potential for perfection and creativity. Self actualization, the ultimate goal of human nature, symbolizes an all-encomassing self-fulfillment in which all physiological and psychological needs are satisfied. There are two realms of behaviour, the instrumental (doing) and the affective (feeling). The traditional assumption is that only the affective aspect is important to women. However, many recent studies have evidenced that work is central to a woman's well-being, and that there is a fundamental importance of a combination of both work and love, supporting Freud's notion of the "two pillars of a happy life". Unfortunately, female needs have been differentiated from male needs, and unfounded assumptions and social reinforcement have precluded equal opportunity for female self-actualization. Clearly, if self-actualization is the ultimate goal, then well-being maximization must be a primary objective. Why should women be satisfied with break-even results, or worse, under utilization of their full potential?

Well-being is an intangible commodity, abstract, like the idea of good health. It does not by any stretch of the imagination, indicate a complete absence of concerns, but rather a balance, with hopefully, the rewarding aspects of one's life outweighing the problematic issues. In a major American study in 1979, Grace Baruch, Rosalind Barnett, and Caryl Rivers determined that a woman's well-being is dependent on two qualitative aspects of her life: 1) her sense of MASTERY (feeling important and worthwhile), and 2) her sense of PLEASURE (finding life enjoyable). Comparing the well-being levels of women in various role sets, they determined that working women had, in general, higher levels of overall well-being, and that work was absolutely central to a woman's feelings of "mastery". The mastery levels were comprised of three well-being components: 1) self esteem, 2) sense of control over one's life, and 3) absence of symptoms of anxiety and depression.

I replicated this study in Canada in 1984, and my findings were similar. The work role proved to be a key role in a woman's role portfolio, in terms of potential contributions to well-being. The contribution from the work role was the strongest predictor of the esteem and control components, and was also positively correlated with the absence of anxiety symptoms component. The work role also had a major impact on pleasure levels, which were comprised of three other well-being components: 1) happiness, 2) life satisfaction, and 3) optimism. In my study, the work role was the second strongest predictor of happiness-satisfaction (the first was the role of lover); although no correlation was found with levels of optimism.

It is clear that women's work (defined here as participation in the labour force - we all know that almost every woman "works"), plays an important role, not only in the continuity of society, but in the quality of their lives. Not discounting the value of the paycheck, we must at the same time, recognize that a job can play an integrating function by providing a woman with self-identity, status, esteem, friends, associates, structure, and even a reason for living. Other studies have found that merely assuming the role of paid worker contributes to a woman's sense of resoursefulness that can usually compensate for most of the problems found on the job. A paycheck is tangible evidence of one's skills, and is connected with feelings of achievement, competence, personal worth, and self-esteem.

One major study found that working women, especially professionals, tend to have very high self-esteem and life satisfaction fifteen to twenty five years after graduation from college, while comparable women, who have played the housewife role for the major part of their lives, have the lowest self-esteem.

Other recent major studies confirm that generally speaking, working women are healthier than housewives. A report published recently by Statistics Canada reveals that women with paying jobs generally enjoy better physical and mental health than homemakers. It concludes that for most of the variables studied, especially those relating to mental health, work outside the home seems to have a positive effect on women's well-being.

Paralleling these findings are those of the U.S. National Health Interview Survey taken in 1977 - 1978. As reported in the March 1985 issue of American Demographics, of the three factors examined, employment has by far the strongest and most consistent tie to women's good health. Marriage ranks second, and parenthood ranks a weak third. Working women had fewer days of restricted activity because of illness, had less chronic illness, spent less time bed-ridden, and in general, felt better than unemployed women. Overall, employed women reported higher rates of excellent or good health than those without jobs outside the home.

These studies have all concluded that multiple roles contribute to well-being. The psychological significance of the number of separate roles a woman performs derives from the power of the roles as sources of identity and self-esteem. Variety has a negative impact on tedium; various roles provide alternate routes to a woman's image of herself and are the best predictors of both satisfaction and happiness. Contrary to popular belief, the "Superwoman" combination of roles is linked to good health. It is role underload - having too few serious commitments - rather than role overload, that has the most negative impact on well-being. Besides providing a woman with a sense of self-esteem, work can act as a buffer to problem's in other spheres of her life. Studies have found that it is being a mother, rather than having a job that can make a woman feel pulled apart and overloaded.

There is no question that work therefore plays a critical role in our overall feelings of well-being. It just makes good sense to nurture and manage this role effectively so that we can derive a healthy return on our investment of time and energy. With so much evidence that job satisfaction is a major determinant of overall life satisfaction, it is crucial that we examine our level of job satisfaction, and if we are dissatisfied with the performance of our work role, it is up to us to plan on how we can improve this undesirable situation. Clearly, we must recognize that work dissatisfaction will have a critical negative impact on our overall well-being.

Many recent studies have found that challenge items in a job have a strong positive relationship to mastery and pleasure, while dull, dead-end jobs are associated with diminished well-being. Three major predictors of job satisfaction were found in my study: 1) the degree of challenge, 2) the variety of tasks, and 3) job fit. This is consistent with the findings of the U.S. National Survey conducted by the 9 to 5 Organization. This major study found that jobs which involve variety, challenge, decision-making and use of skills were more likely to be perceived as "stressful", but these conditions were not found to be related to health problems. On the other hand, never finding interest or challenge or never having decision-making autonomy (conditions in jobs less likely to be labelled "stressful") were the job aspects most frequently associated with negative health effects. This information should be a catalyst to women to develop their marketable skills, in terms of education and training, so that women can effectively compete with men for these interesting and challenging jobs, which solely through job design, have much greater potential for increased work satisfaction, and hence, heightened overall well-being.

There is also a strong relationship between the chance to make friends on the job and life satisfaction. Studies have found that feelings of isolation at work or in the home are associated with low life satisfaction. Besides contributing to a woman's sense of mastery, the workplace provides a woman with the scope to expand her social contacts. In fact, the need for social contact is one of the major psychological needs cited as a reason to work. When relations with co-workers are pleasant and relatively conflict free, the pleasure contributions from the work role to a woman's overall well-being will be potentially higher.

The question of income is interesting. In my study, income was the work-related item least correlated with job satisfaction. This is consistent with many motivational studies which have found that money is not the best motivator for employees, and that the best results are achieved if the behaviour is motivated intrinsically. Intrinsically motivated behaviours are rewarding in themselves, driven by an individual's underlying need for competence and self-determination. People can be happy or miserable in any job. While that raise is a welcomed pat on the back, it won't make you like the job any better. A woman will be happiest and derive the most satisfaction from a job that she likes and that she knows she performs well. Job fit considerations should be a priority in any career decision.

The writing is on the wall, and the message is clear - THE WORK ROLE IS CENTRAL TO FEMALE WELL-BEING. But will this proclamation fall on deaf ears? It is high time that the male-dominated society dismiss the notion of women as a secondary workforce. Recent statistics show that women constitute 42% of the Canadian workforce. Most women marry and work outside the home for at least thirty years, and those who do not marry may work for forty five years. Seventy four percent of all women have to support themselves at some point in their lives; some remain single, others are divorced or widowed. In 1983, 61% of the female workforce was married, and wives' financial contributions to the family, especially in low income homes, are essential to increasing our standard of living. A woman's work can no longer be looked at as a passing fancy or a temporary economic necessity. Because work is fundamental to female well-being, it must be taken just as seriously as male employment. It is obvious that the reciprocal effects between women, their work, and society must be "managed". In redefining the importance of women's work, a realistic assessment of the status of female employment must incorporate not only a present situational analysis, but also a projection of future potential. In other workds, individually and collectively, we must assess where we are now, target wehre we want to go, and then develop action plans to get us there.

A sense of direction is essential, not only for motivation, but also for sound decision making and evaluative judgment. Strategic planning at both the micro and macro levels, is a prerequisite for the full realization of the potential interdependent well-being effects that can accrue to individual women and society at large from the benefits of female employment.

contd. P. 14

N A I R O B I RE-VISITED

by Victorya Monkman

On the first day of my forty-first year, a jumbo jet carried me safely on the first leg of a trip half-way around the world. When I was an adolescent and the cry, "Uhuru" had reverberated from Kenya, I had dreamt of visiting the land Jomo Kenyatta had led out of colonialism. The world, Kenya and I have all changed since then. My destination - like that of 12,000 other women - was Forum'85, an occasion to celebrate women's power, an opportunity to evaluate with sisters from all parts of our global community the effects of a full decade of international attention on the conditions of women's lives.

Each day I spent in Kenya was rich and intensive. Time seemed not to divide itself into 24 hour periods but rather distinctive experiences into a vibrant cloth which I call "my stay in Kenya". Each morning I ate a huge papaya bought daily for 2s (20¢) from the vendor whose cry "jambo, mama" brought me to the high locked fence of the garden. Like all Kenyan market women she carried the heavy fruit in a huge basket on her back, the supporting strap passing over her shoulders and around her forehead. Each morning I drank a cup of sweet Kenyan coffee as I sat on the stoop of the small cement-construction cottage I shared with five other Canadian women, one of whom has brought her children to learn their African heritage. Each lunch time I ate chips or samosas or spicy sausages from the road-side stands with the ubiquitous "soda".

Each morning I threw this Kamba over my shoulders and took a crowded mtatu or a crowded bus, the only white person and recognizably a "conference delegate". Each day I bargained in the markets for treasures: crafts whose utilitarian sophistication and beauty spoke loudly of ancient traditions. Baskets, beadwork, animal sculptures, cloth, paintings, brass and copper bracelets... Each evening, I shared adventures and a meal. Each night I slept soundly in a city whose citizens rarely go out at night.

What do you think the Forum was like? What was it like for a feminist to pass through the security barriers, enter and want to talk with each and every one of the women there? Women who had walked across Europe singing for peace, women with glorious turbans, floating head scarfs, shaven heads with intricated beaded bands of colour, women who had organized, fought and been jailed, whose best friends had been buried alive, women in wheelchairs. There were over 2000 workshops covering every issue from water management to "What if Women Ruled the World?". There were buttons, posters, books and pamphlets.

Bella Abzug in her hat shaking everyone's hand. Angela Davis in dreadlocks speaking her passion on behalf of women. Betty Friedan sitting under a tree teaching the next generation of feminists as wise women have across the milleniums. There were little Iranian girls huddled in their chador, followed everywhere and closely by their men for whom they parroted the litany of patriarchy on command. There were angry women whose sons, brothers and fathers had been killed by patriarchal bullets. There were lesbians women surrounded by young Kenyan men whose own culture did not encourage them so much as to look at straight women. There were women playing saxophones and drums in our magic circle. There were Japanese women dancing with Kenyan country women and there was the Peace Tent.

Of course no undertaking of the magnitude of the Forum is without difficulties and crises. Many women from industrialized countries had to adjust to the pace and particularities of an African culture, a Third World Culture. It is quite a different experience to have read and thought about the infrastructures of a developing nation and to actually experience it. However, the opportunity to learn and grow was unparalleled. To be a white women in a totally black environment taught me more than all the literature on racism I have read. Moreover the atmosphere of the Forum was sometimes overwhelming - l'embarras du choix, quoi!

When all is said and done, however, it is the Peace Tent which remains the symbol of Forum '85 for me. Both physically and psychically it was the center of the vortex of energy of 12,000 women. We met our friends there. We heard Soviet and American peace activist discuss their

perspectives. At one point government (?) officials became concerned that too many "political" issueswere being raised there. Dame Nita Barrow the chief organizer told them that if they closed the Peace Tent the organizing committee would close the Forum and they could deal with the 12,000 women. Needless to say the Peace Tent remained open!

Finally, it is my impression that we accomplished many tangible tasks eg. women of physical difference formed a world network. In addition we achieved an intangible victory,I believe that few women left the conference without a shared understanding that social development (whatever the priorities of any particular geographic region) cannot be achieved without a significant reduction in military spending and without international peace and cooperation. Moreover these changes in national and international priorities will not occur until women accede to all levels of power and decision-making.

This concensus was reached in women's ways - one-to-one and in small groups,eating together, dancing together, sharing our thoughts and feelings and life experiences.

I would not have missed it for the world!

●●●●●●●●●●●●●

Work Role Achieves Star Status....contd.

Before any action plans can be implemented, major attitudinal change must occur. Once work has been accepted as a key role in a woman's role in a woman's life, adjustments in other roles can be negotiated. However, major changes in role patterns will necessitate enlightened management, not only in business, social, and political arenas, but also in the lives of individual women.●

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Nairn Scott-Friemann teaches the Institute's off-campus course titled: Women and Finance.

EXCERPTS FROM THE OPENING STATEMENT BY
The Honourable Walter F. McLean, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and Head of the Canadian Delegation at the United Nations Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the U.N. Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace

Nairobi, Kenya, July 16, 1985

In Canada, the Decade has brought many changes in the lives of women and thus in our society. Whether in educational attainment, in access to better paying jobs and income security, in health care and promotion, or in basic legal rights, there have been marked improvements. Vigilance is always necessary to ensure that these entitlements are not unwittingly sacrificed as we struggle to revitalize our economies.

Over the Decade a key factor in the progress we have made towards equality in Canada has been the establishment or reinforcement of governmental machinery for the advancement of women. This machinery, at both the federal and provincial/territorial levels, is intended to stimulate, develop and coordinate the implementation of policy which integrates the concerns of women in all decision-making of government. Three elements -- A Minister, and office to assist the Minister, and an independent advisory council -- are the basis of machinery for addressing status of women issues in Canada. This is true for most of Canada's provinces and two territories.

In response to the clear message from women's groups, our machinery has facilitated the adoption of legislation, policy and program changes for women's benefit. While there are variations from province to province and between provincial and federal governments, these changes span the spectrum of federal and provincial policies:

- Equal treatment for women and men in pension entitlements;
- Increased participation by women in public life;
- Improvements in paid maternity leave, provisions for parental leave for both parents;
- An increase in publicly funded child care places;
- The introduction of affirmative action in the public services of some jurisdictions and voluntary affirmative action programs for private industry;

- The adoption of legislation guaranteeing equal pay for equal value;
- Extensive changes in family law, including property the reform of divorce law and the enforcement of maintenance and custody orders;
- A greatly enhanced system of transition houses for battered women;
- Criminal code changes to deal more effectively with men who assault women sexually or who beat their wives;
- A new health care act and improvements in health care and promotion based on an approach which recognizes that different stages of a woman's life present different health concerns;
- Revisions to the Indian Act to reinstate women who had previously lost their status by marrying non-Indians.

The significant contribution of Quebec is reflective of their important leadership role in the evolution of the women's movement in Canada.

Canada's objective for this Conference is to seek improvements in the situation of women world-wide -- to find agreement on strategies which will release their energies to participate feely and fully in the economic and social development of their countries.

Though here, on the African continent, a particular emphasis is placed on development, we recognize that there is an inter-relationship between development and peace. Not that the one is dependent to such a degree on the other, that we say 'there can be no development without peace', but that each will reinforce the other. History abounds with examples where human misery has led to unrest and war; and where war has resulted in the impoverishment of peoples. Both men and women suffer when conflict breaks out, but it is women in particular who bear the greater burden. Rarely, however, in the decision-making processes in our societies do women play a role proportionate to their sacrifices. That situation is changing. I have no doubt that women will increasingly bring to the council tables of the world a dimension which is sorely needed.

In our discussions during these next two weeks, the themes and sub-themes of the Decade are a constant reminder of the mutually reinforcing nature of international and national policies. We are discussing policies whose content and direction have an impact on women which in many cases is different from their impact on men. Our success at Nairobi will reside in our ability to translate this difference into the treatment of the most difficult issues -- to approach the substance through the special women's perspective. ●

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

Under a half moon, without police protection, escort, or permission, some 120 oddwomen took to the streets to celebrate women without fear: Femmes sans peur.

The size of the march may have dismayed some but this woman found the spirit and energy of the group made up for any lack of numbers.

We howled our way south on St. Denis from carré St. Louis to Ontario then east on Ontario to a street I can't remember the name of, and then through Park Lafontaine back around somehow to Duluth, and ended at Duluth and St. Denis.

I have a suggestion. Perhaps Take Back the Night should be organized in future in several small marches taking place in different areas of the city. In this way the nuisance of police protection and permits could be avoided and each group could set their own route and distinct spirit.

Afterward a group dance/ whoop up could be organized.

Special thanks to the women who put it together, the women who made the signs, to my friends who were there and to Everywoman.

-Anne Gay

"AS A WOMAN I HAVE NO COUNTRY"

A Conference on Muslim Women

By Mair Verthuy

" Talking about Moslem women at all is a mighty challenge in a North American setting where public opinion is coloured by negative images of the Moslem world conveyed by the media".

Fatima Houda-Pépin of Le Centre Maghrébin de Recherche et d'Information (CMRI) accepted that challenge; from October 3-6, 1985 in Montréal a conference took place that had been two years aborning and whose "midwives" included a number of Canadian and Québec governmental organisations: CIDA and Secratary of State (Canada); Ministries of the Status of Women and of International Relations (Québec).

Despite the somewhat arid title (Socio-Economic Conference on Moslem Women of the Third World and Canada), the conference was an exciting event that included a day of films (try and see Leila and the Wolves) and speakers from the four main poles of Muslim civilization: North Africa, Black Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

There were two days of papers, each with a different theme. Those presented on the first day covered various aspects of the life of Muslim women in Islam itself. The second day was more concerned with the conditions (present and future) of Muslim women in Québec/Canada. The Institute was well represented: by Laila Dhanani (Image of the Moslem Women in Canadian Print Media); by Sheila McDonough (Moslem Women of Pakistan); by Mair Verthuy (Le mensonge multiculturel; le défi scolaire).

The first day gave rise to much lively debate between the podium and the public, as Muslim women (and men) spoke about their own relationship to Islam. Feminists and fundamentalists engaged in a passionate ideological discussion somewhat reminiscent of the debate the Catholic church, for instance, has known between women like Soeur Minique Dumais who, while remaining within it, wish to reform its structures and carve out a more significant role for women (the film , Beyond The Veil is a good example of this) and others, more conservative who believe that the specific nature of women is better suited to traditional roles. It was good to be reminded, however, that the teachings of the Prophet gave women a social equality and economic autonomy that the Christian churches have not always preached. It is always ironic, of course, to note that it is probably because of the pressure of feminism that fundamentalist

women of all faiths have returned to the original texts to seek there an endorsement of their equality with men that has not always been apparent or practised. Would Real Women be so articulate in public if their feminist foremother had not fought for education for women and for universal suffrage, had not established our right to fight for our beliefs, one wonders.

It should not be imagined that all the speakers at this saturday meeting represented one tendency and that the "opposition" was to be found on the floor of the hall. Fatima Houda-Pépin had no wish to present only one aspect of Muslim life to the detriment of all others. Representatives of all views were to be found on the platform and it was this tension (friendly) between diverging views that showed those present the dynamic nature of Islam and made the day so rewarding.

The Sunday presentations dealt with life in Canada and, oddly enough if one thinks about it, gave rise to less provocative debate with the floor, although many comments were made and questions asked. It is to be regretted that more non-Muslim Canadians, more government administrators, more school commissioners were not present to hear about the needs of this significant part of our population and to meditate on the solutions proposed, whether these involve the school and university curriculum, the social services, language teaching to immigrants. Funding a conference is a first step, but only a first step.

Fatima and all who helped her are to be congratulated on their achievements. The rest of us must now also help to ensure that this first round in the debate between Muslim and non-Muslim women is not the last. The U. N. Decade for women may have drawn to a close. For women, the real decade may only be beginning.

How many of you out there are listening?

Mair Verthuy is a Fellow of the Institute and an Assoc. Proffesor in the French Department.

LE COLLOQUE DES PERIODIQUES FEMINISTES

par Jeanne Maranda

Nous étions une soixantaine, toutes résolument impliquées dans la publication de périodiques féministes francophones et anglophones du Canada. Nous avions accepté l'invitation de Susan de Rosa, membre de l'exécutif de Communiqu'elles de Montréal, qui nous avait regroupées à l'auberge Handfield, sur les bords du Richelieu les 14 et 16 juin 1985.

Poussées par le même désir d'améliorer notre sort, de partager nos expériences, nos déboires comme nos succès, d'échanger nos "tuyaux", de briser notre isolement, nous avons passé deux jours complets en immersion totale dans le monde du journalisme féministe, parlant la langue des professionnelles des salles de rédaction.

D'après les retours d'un questionnaire très précis qu'Eleonor Wachtel de Vancouver (Room of One's Own) avait construit à partir des besoins exprimés par chacune des 35 responsables des publications qui y ont répondu, le colloque fut articulé autour de quatre grands thèmes:

- les problèmes d'éthique et de politique éditoriale;
- les problèmes plus concrets de la mise en marché, de la promotion;
- la conception graphique;
- les problèmes du financement..

Dimanche en fin de journée, Jacqueline Manthorne, rédactrice en chef de Communiqu'elles, faisait le point sur le colloque. Elle a fait part des priorités mises de l'avant par les participantes:

- La mise en marche d'une grande campagne nationale de promotion regroupant toutes les publications féministes avec échange des listes d'abonnées;
- Une équipe-choc sera mise sur pied dans le but spécifique d'aider une publication en difficulté;
- On veut une banque de photos, de caricatures, d'illustrations;

- Les contacts avec les minorités invisibles seront élargis;

- Et comme projet à long terme: jeter les bases d'une organisation nationale avec une permanence.

Et sur une notre pleine d'optimisme on a résolu de se retrouver à Toronto l'an prochain, où les 4 ou 5 publications féministes de cette ville nous accueilleront.

Les périodiques fininistes avaient besoin de cette rencontre. Ce fut comme une injection de sang nouveau. Les priorités énoncées ont fouetté les énergies. Nous avons de plus en plus confiance dans le force de nos publications et de notre message. Le travail n'est pas fini, loin de là, il faut maintenant consolider ce mouvement que rien ne fera plus reculer.

Jeanne Maranda est la Rédactrice francophone de Les Cahiers de la Femme, et est aussi inscrite au programme de Women's Studies à l'institut Simone de Beauvoir.

Théoricienne féministe.

"Bienheureux es-tu lecteur si tu n'es point de ce sexe, qu'on interdit de tous les biens, l'interdisant de la liberté".

(Le Grief des Dames 1626)

DU TRAVAIL ET DE L'AMOUR

Les dessous de la production domestique

Vandelac, Louise et coll.
Editions Saint-Martin, 1985, 418pp.

par Lucie LEQUIN

Du travail et de l'amour met en perspective l'ensemble de la problématique de la reproduction domestique "cette activité carrefour de la sexualité, de la maternité et des mille et un geste non payés qui font et entretiennent la vie quotidienne".

Ouvrage spécialisé à plusieurs voix qui, constamment, rappelle la complexité de ce sujet quasi tabou et illustre la genèse du rôle actuel de la ménagère. A plusieurs reprises, les quatre auteures définissent ce rôle dévalorisé et rappellent à celles qui ne se disent pas ménagères qu'elles le sont sans doute encore. Toutefois, elles se gardent d'enfermer les femmes dans un vécu univoque et global.

Leurs textes s'emboîtent les uns dans les autres, se répondent, se complètent. Louise Vandelac qui a assuré la coordination de cette recherche signe l'avant-propos et la conclusion. Le premier chapitre par Louise Vandelac et Anne Gauthier, fait état de la problématique du travail domestique; il s'attaque au coeur du sujet et donne une vue d'ensemble des principales données et analyses sur cette activité.

Deux autres chapitres sont consacrés à l'histoire domestique. Le premier synthétise les grandes lignes du développement domestique en France, en Angleterre, aux Etats-Unis, au Canada durant quatre siècles. Ce survol de Diane Belisle est complété par une rétrospective de la production domestique au Québec de 1850 à 1960. Plus près de nous, cette analyse de "l'ouvrage des femmes québécoises" décante certains mythes tenaces sur nos aïeules. De plus, ce texte de D. Belisle et de Yolande Pinard rend visible le processus de ménagérisation qui n'a pas toujours régit la vie des

femmes.

Par la suite, Diane Belisle s'interroge sur le temps de travail domestique, cette "entreprise non lucrative, à temps perpétuel". Son analyse montre comment l'économie marchande mutile le temps domestique et le réduit ne pouvant l'incorporer au temps artificiel du profit. Le texte suivant explore les différentes évaluations monétaires du temps domestique qui, selon Vandelac, n'en traduisent pas encore la valeur réelle, car les grilles d'analyse monétaire de la sphère marchande ne peuvent s'appliquer, sans transformation, à la sphère domestique. Il faut, dit-elle, poser de nouvelles questions.

Dans le chapitre suivant, Anne Gauthier analyse en détails le rapport des femmes du Québec à l'Etat. Elle montre entre autre, comment l'Etat contribue à légitimer et à maintenir les rapports de dépendance des femmes en occultant la réalité du travail domestique.

Enfin, le dernier chapitre traite du partage des tâches. Illusion ou réalité? L'écart entre les discours et les statistiques est des plus éloquents: le partage des tâches n'existe pas ou si peu pour si peu de femmes. "Cessons d'appeler partage, ce qui est l'envers et de prétendre qu'ils nous aident quand c'est nous qui les aidons", dit l'auteure.

Cet ouvrage réfléchi, documenté, constitue un ensemble de données importantes sur la vie domestique, la vie quotidienne de tant de femmes. Il éclaire la face cachée de notre vie sociale et économique. Dans cette époque, où l'on oppose trop souvent ménagères et travailleuses salariées les auteures tentent de sonder les raisons de ce malaise et elles posent plusieurs jalons qui pourront alimenter des recherches fructueuses. Surtout, elles veulent inviter les femmes à poursuivre l'écriture des dessous de l'amour.

C'est un défi!●

****

Lucie Lequin est un Fellow de l'Institut et elle enseigne des cours en Women's Studies à l'Institut.

CAT AMONG THE PIGEONS: FEMINISM AND SCIENCE

Reflections on Gender and Science
by Evelyn Fox Keller
Yale University Press. 193pp.

by Patricia Morley

One of the most cherished assumptions of the modern scientist is that science is impersonal, autonomous, objective and value free. Few laymen would dare to differ. Evelyn Fox Keller, as a scientist and a woman, found herself an outsider and used her alienation to good advantage.

Reflections on Gender and Science takes a hard look at the relations between scientific theory and the societies in which they were formed. It reflects a personal quest begun in the 1970s and caught in nine essays written over the last decade. As Keller put it, her own learning experience was not so much about women as men and, even more, science itself.

Keller's radical reflections were made possible by new thinking in two areas:feminist theory and sociology of science. Her breakthrough lay in establishing links between the two. Social studies of science had shown that it developed within a social and political context. Feminist theory showed the major role of social conditioning in gender development. Keller realized that both gender and science are socially constructed categories. Just as men and women are 'made' not born (it takes a while to get used to this one), so science reflects the world-views and social patterns of its creators. Most of them have been white, middle-class males.

Many of us still adhere to a notion established in the seventeenth century, that established laws govern the workings of nature. Feminist thought, on the other hand, shares with de Beauvoir the understanding that "representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which the,, confuse with the absolute truth". Over the centuries, one scientific world-view after another has been forced to surrender that divine prerogative.

From a feminist perspective, Keller challenges the myth of objectivity and its accepted link with 'masculine' or rational thought. After this subversion has been accomplished, her goal is the establishment of new patterns based on the concept of order rather than law. Such a conception, she argues, allows nature to be complex and resourceful rather than blindly subservient: "It suggests a science premised on respect rather than domination, neither impotent nor coercive but, as knowledge always is, inevitably empowering."

Keller is a professor of mathematics and humanities at Northeastern University. Reflections is a shrewd and philosophical assessment of the history of science and of modern society. There are difficulties but no jargon, complexity without cant. It's well worth the careful reading it requires.●

FILM REVIEW

SOLDIER GIRLS

Churchill Films, 1981
87 min. Colour
Dist: Gordon Watt

This documentary captures the military experiences of a group of young women who have enlisted in the US army. It focuses on the women as they go through basic training and make what is in most cases a painful adjustment to military life.

Some Thoughts on Soldier Girls

by Jo Vellacott

The first, and perhaps the hardest thing, to realize about this film is that it is fact, not fiction and not a reconstruction, but shot right then and there in a military training camp. What we are seeing is a training program of which the U.S. army is proud. ●

Although in one dimension Soldier Girls is a straightforward documentary, free of commentary, it is multi-layered in a way few documentaries can be. Indeed, if ever there was a film which could be different things to different people, this is surely it. When I saw it, I was devastated by its direct impact, by simply watching what was going on, although I have known for a long time of worse instances of brutal military training. There are indeed certain things which the military are careful to avoid in this unit, overt sexism and overt racism among them; we hear no struggling woman recruit accused - as a male recruit experiencing the same difficulty might have been - of being womanish; and the black woman who does not make the grade is on a par with the white woman.

Now, months later, recalling the film, I see it, still more devastatingly, as an allegory, or rather, as a microcosm of a world dominated by militaristic values. Here are women who have never felt themselves worthwhile, grateful for the chance, as they see it, to prove themselves by making it through this hell, to have something to be proud of. Here are women admitted to the most male of male systems on condition of unquestioning conformity to the norm of the lowest rung of that system. In no way is their inclusion in that system to be allowed to change it by one iota; all change must be on their part. The techniques of control are significant and should be familiar; scapegoating, destruction of personality, the use of "successful" women against their less successful companions, identification of inability to conform as mental illness, instillation of a value system which must not be questioned and which differs subtly from that with which individuals entered, the carrot of acceptance constantly dangled, the stick of punishment and exclusion threatened, even the acquiescence of the male authority figure in his own dehumanization and his acceptance of it as a worthwhile sacrifice - in what cause?

What that is positive can we bring away from the experience of seeing this film? Only, I think, an increased awareness of the connection between militarism and anti-feminism, and of the overwhelming need for women to see radical change in the whole male-dominated militaristic system as the goal, rather than mere admission to it.●

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Dr. Vellacott is a Fellow of the Institute and an Associate Professor in Women's Studies.

NEW IN THE READING ROOM !!!!!!!!!

WOMEN OF CHINA

Magazines contributed by Dr. Gail Valaskakis

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COVER PICTURE:

The Liangshan Yi Nationality Autonomous Prefecture in southern Sichuan Province with a population of 1.4 million (70 percent Yi) is the largest Yi community in China. At the Yi Torch Festival in late June young men and women sing and dance through the night. This photo is of the festival in Butuo County.

Photo by SHEN YANTAI

WSSA

WSSA WSSA

WSSA

WSSA WSSA

Q: WHAT is WSSA ?

A: WSSA is the WOMEN'S STUDIES STUDENT ASSOCIATION and it may be what you're looking for if:

- you'd like to get to know other Women's Studies students better,
- you have ideas and/or comments you'd like to share,
- you care about the Institute, the Women's Studies program and the women who surround you,
- you'd like to contribute to Institute activities,
- or you'd like to see a higher student profile at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute.

by Jo-Anne Beggs
Final year student at the
Simone de Beauvoir Institute

* * * * * * * *

WSSA plays both a functional and social role at the Institute. All Women's Studies students may attend Council meetings, and WSSA yields voting priviledges at the governing Institute Committees and have been involved in the planning of curriculum, the organizing of a weekend retreat at Concordia's Lacolle Centre and in the study of the possible implementation of a Master's Program in Women's Studies.

Equally important is the social function WSSA serves for students. Women's Studies is an area of study which can be extremely confrontational and challenging. Many of us feel the need to connect with other women to better understand, develop and explore our emotional and intellectual growth. Women's Studies is also an area where strong bonds of friendship and caring develop between students and professors. WSSA wants to respond to the needs and interests of students by offering a realm of co-currular activities this year.

But, we need your help. If you have ideas and energy to offer, please consider getting involved with WSSA. If committee work interests you, think about serving on the Curriculum, Co-curricular, Library, Liaison, Human Resources, or Graduate Studies Committees. You can play a role in influencing policy and action. Or, why not help WSSA serve students? We need help organizing such planned co-curricular activities as a ping-pong tournament, colloquia, creative writing workshops, vegetarian cooking courses, creativity sessions, film screenings and bagel and beer parties.

WSSA IS YOUR STUDENT ASSOCIATION. Why not get to know WSSA and the women of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute? For information, call the WSSA office at 848-7449, ask about us in class or speak directly to Jo-Anne Beggs (649-5627), Catherine Kellogg (523-3376), Mona MacLean or leave us a message in our Institute mailbox.

If you're in the Institute building, drop by the WSSA office (301-1) any time. Our phone, typewriter, books sofa and chairs are there for all Women's Studies students. If the office is locked, just ask Françoise at the Reception office for the key, let yourself in and make yourself comfortable. Feel free also to use the WSSA bulletin board in the hallway of the first floor, for posting information, messages, etc.

Hope to hear from you soon!

THE BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB OF MONTREAL

LE CLUB DE FEMMES DE CARRIÈRES LIBÉRALES ET COMMERCIALES DE MONTRÉAL

P.O. BOX 471 – STATION H, MONTREAL, QUEBEC H3G 2L1

September 25, 1985

Mr. Tom Van Buynhoven
President,
Coleco Canada Ltd.
4000, St-Ambroise
Montreal, Quebec
H4C 2C8

Dear Mr. Buynhoven,

We are writing you with regard to your company's plans to market a "Rambo Doll".

Though no one will deny the importance for companies to develop and market products which will be successful in a competitive environment, it is also true that those products and goods must respond to the highest ethical and moral needs of its customers. The company, within this latter context thus has a moral obligation that extends well beyond the figures of a cash register.

Given the fact that the recent film Rambo has been censored for viewing by children and is admissable to the restricitve audience of adults the manufacturing and promotion of your 'Rambo Doll' exacerbates for children the values of racism, violence, and war. These values, as I am sure you will agree, represent historically the inherent weakness of our past.

We therefore, find it unacceptable that your company would want to teach and reinforce to children that violence, racism and war are positive. It is very sad that your company which brought to children the delightful Cabbage Patch Kids should now turn around and sell a doll which teaches children to kill and mutilate. Why have you done this?

Given the importance of this issue to us, we have taken steps to advise both the Canadian Consumer Association and the Quebec Consumer Association, of your company's intentions to market the 'Rambo' product. Rest assured that failure to stop the marketing of the 'Rambo Doll' ensures that we will support the effort to organize a national boycott of your company's entire product line. In closing, may we ask you, on behalf of all children during this closing of the United Nation's International Year of the Youth, that your company reconsider its marketing plans.

Sincerely yours,

Maria Peluso

Maria E. Peluso
Vice President

«DEFI 85»

par Marielle Cyr
et Sylvie Nicole

Nous avons effectué cet été, dans le cadre d'un projet "DEFI 85", une recherche sur la critique littéraire. On s'est payé beaucoup de lecture, en fait toute la critique de l'oeuvre romanesque de l'écrivain québécois Jacques Ferron*. Notre but était de monter une grille d'analyse thématique permettant l'étude des thèmes abordés par la critique. Nous avons tôt fait de remarquer que cette même critique, tout en privilégiant certaines questions tels le Nationalisme, l'histoire, l'identité et le symbolisme, passait outre des aspects importants et révélateurs de l'oeuvre.

Nous nous sommes attardées plus spécifiquement au fait que la critique portant sur la vision des femmes dans Ferron, s'avère à la fois androcentrique et incomplète. Nous avons relevé que les personnages féminins auxquels on accorde le plus d'importance sont ceux qui se définissent primordialement par leur rapport à l'homme (la mère, la prostituée), les autres soulevant peu d'intérêt.

L'image de la femme permettant un passage initiatique et libérateur (de l'homme à son autonomie personnelle et collective) existe sous plusieurs représentations. Malheureusement cette image est peu questionnée par les critiques qui la mentionnent généralement comme un fait établi et naturel. Le fait que la prise en charge de l'autonomie collective aille jusqu'à passer par la possession/pénétration de la "femme de l'ennemi" ne semble pas étonner. La plupart s'entendent là-dessus sans considérer que cette image est celle d'un viol et présuppose une hiérarchie genrale.

Le point de vue de la libération de l'homme prédomine dans la quête d'autonomie collective et nationale. La femme ne fait que faciliter cette libération sans y avoir accès. Le discours utilisé renforce l'idéologie mâle qui oriente le but à atteindre.

Enfin, ce que les critiques soulèvent comme étant une transgression des clichés culturels et littéraires dans l'oeuvre de Ferron, déçoit par son conformisme patriarcal.

Nous poursuivrons notre recherche et vous tiendrons au courant des développements.

A la prochaine !!!

* Décédé au printemps '85, Jacques Ferron est connu pour ses contes, romans et pièces de théâtre. Il fut également le fondateur du parti rhinoceros.

Ce projet fut élaboré par Professeure Maïr Verthuy et subventionné par le Gouvernement Fédéral. ●

EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE:

Nancy DeGraff, Laila Dhanani, Linda Dyer, Catherine Kellogg, Lucie Lequin

PRODUCTION:

Françoise Auclair Laila Dhanani

I cannot be a waitress
with polished nails and pretty lips
I cannot be a sweet young thing
with straining breasts and swaying hips
I do not wear tight clothing
perched on top of spiky heels
or wear perfume
to make men swoon
in short have 'sex appeal'

I cannot be that woman
you see in magazines, for
I will not shave my armpits
do I then have 'bad hygiene'
I will not bring your coffee
or answer to 'hey girl'
or bat my eyes
and condone the lies
encouraged by this world.

by Frances Anonsen

FEMMES et MATHEMATIQUE

par Louise Lafortune

Connaissez-vous l'IOWME (International Organisation of Women and Mathematics Education)

En voici donc un bref historique. L'IOWME a pris forme lors du troisième congrès international sur l'enseignement de la mathématique (ICME III), à Karlsruhe en Allemagne en 1976. Deux Australiennes, Jan Kennedy et Nancy Shelley, déçues du manque de représentation des femmes comme conférencières et membres de panel, ont organisé, à l'intérieur du congrès, une rencontre improvisée pour discuter sur le thème "Femmes et Mathématique".

Suite à cette rencontre de 50 personnes, le mouvement a commencé et les buts donnés à L'IOWME ont été:

1. Rassembler les personnes intéressées au sujet "Femmes et Mathématique".
2. Faire circuler parmi les membres toutes recheches disponibles sur le thème "Femmes et Mathématique".
3. Elargir l'organisation en autant de pays que cela sera jugé nécessaire.
4. Encourager de nouvelles recherches dégageant
   a) les raisons pour lesquelles si peu de femmes étudient la mathématique;
   b) les possibilités d'emploi pour celles qui se qualifient.

L'étude du thème "Femmes et Mathématique" semble susciter un intérêt grandissant. De plus, plusieurs personnes acceptent la nécessité d'une plus grande participation des femmes en mathématique et dans les congrès mathématiques.

Quelle est la place du Québec dans 1'IOWME ?

Comme vous le savez, les distances sont grandes au Canada et une représentante pour tout le pays ne peut pas vraiment suffire.

Le 11 juin 1985, à l'intérieur de la rencontre annuelle du Groupe Canadien d'Etude en Didactique des Mathématiques (GCEDM), un dîner-rencontre eut lieu pour regrouper les personnes intéressées au thème "Femmes et Mathématique", pour discuter des objectifs de la participation du Canada dans l'IOWME, mais aussi pour mieux y cerner la place du Québec.

La première partie de cette rencontre permit aux personnes présentes, venant de l'ensemble du Canada, de partager les expériences tentées dans leurs provinces respectives, Pendant la deuxième partie de cette rencontre, les personnes du Québec discutèrent d'actions possibles à réaliser au Québec. Dans ce contexte, la section québécoise de l'IOWME décida d'organiser une journée d'échanges pour la fin de mai ou le début de juin 1986.

Les personnes désireuses d'assister à cette journée ou de venir y présenter leur recherche, terminée ou en cours, ou de partager les expériences tentées dans leur salle de cours sur le thème "Femmes et Mathématique" sont invitées. Le lieu (Montréal ou Québec) et la date exacte de cette rencontre restent à déterminer.

Depuis le 11 juin 1985, Louise Lafortune, professeure de mathématique au Cegep André Laurendeau, est la personne-ressources pour le Québec et le lien avec Gila Hanna. Pour plus de renseignements ou pour devenir membres de l'IOWME, vous pouvez communiquer avec elle, avant le 30 Novembre 1985:

Louise Lafortune
1111 rue Lapierre
LaSalle, Québec
H8N 2J4 Tel.(514) 364-3320

En espérant vous retrouver à la journée d'échanges,
IOWME, section québécoise. ●

DIFFERENTLY-ABLED WOMEN,

Sisters, our brains are questioned in position of administration.
In this partriarchal system, social beauties have leeway to gaining power
But when your bodies twist or lack sensation
Female social accommodated role turns sour.

If you're not a boy
And you're not a girl - not really
Are you non-existent therefore?
Now all in all your inner self feels very silly.

Have you ever wondered why?
The system promotes such images of you.
It can't change no matter what we try
Seems like there is something one must do.

Our able-bodied sisters don't know.
Disabled men don't care.
Differently-abled sisters, how can we grow?
Our concerns are ignored - that ain't fair.

There is a politic in the air.
It devalues our brains
And gives our bodies strange stare.
Now, hold it sisters; we're sane.

We are labled devient cause they don't understand
How our silent, foggy ears, eyes, twisting, numb bodies
Permit us to have self-command!
Now that is their own follies.

OUR PLACES

Their politics, as I see
Promotes wealth, health and good looks.
Therefore it is not about you and me
Nor are our able-bodied sisters' books.

We have potential in the political arena, bedrooms, and boardrooms
Equal to that of our able-bodied sisters and men with disabilities.
There will be no reason for feelings of gloom,
Once we demand equal share as a collectivity.

Differently-abled sisters, what can we say about friends and lovers.
The mystique of us in role of wives
Leads even men with disabilities to prefer the others.
For love and affection we no longer strive.

Able bodied men's needs for dependent women
When their pride is shadowed
Makes them forget that our feelings are human.
Love and marriage is too far and too much to be bothered.

When the physical world is made for you and me
Within the women's movement we'll gain access.
Patriarchal-male-politics will change you'll see
Our place within the disabled person's and women's
movement will be reassessed.

Maria Barile

MY POINT OF VIEW...

WHO AM I?

by D. Kozinska

Who am I is a question asked by human beings since the beginning of time. These days, more and more women are asking this question. Although for us the question often stems from social rather than philosophical approaches, let us not separate the sexes but look at ourselves as beings of equal caliber. Even then, the question still remains... Who am I?

It is difficult to accept our lives as just a part of a cycle, never-ending. Our consciousness, our awareness of ourselves, allows us no peace of mind. The Ego finds it hard to acknowledge that it (the human being) is made of a mass of molecules, of an evergy, and deep down inside harbours the belief that it is unique. The fact that we are all aware of death, adds another dimension to our psyche. Why do we have this awareness? Why do we live those lives of pathos, and why do we fear death so?

Maybe death should not be feared at all, maybe it is just a passage, a state of transit. Transit of what, though? Of the being that is the "I", I think. If we are in fact made of some form of energy, and energy can be used up but cannot die, it is possible then, that as our physical form deteriorates and finally dies, our spirit (energy) continues on. Which brings me to the duality of a human being.

The physical versus the mental. The mental versus the spiritual. Which is the real "me"? People often praise or blame us for having (sic) a nice body, an evil mind, a kind soul. If I am not the body, I just possess one, just as I possess a mind and a soul, who then is the "I" so generously endowed with all these attributes? It is at this momentthat one is tempted to consider the spiritual being, and what follows: life after death.

Is it just coincidence that most religions share this belief? Let us take buddhist philosophy for example, and the idea of negating the Ego as the path to "bliss", ergo non-existence. What happens to the consciousness when the Ego is foresaken? When one is no longer a man or a woman, an actor or a bag lady? The goal of meditation is to achieve that stage. In meditation, thoughts are wipe out, and one stops (for all purposes) being aware of oneself. In a way, one is unconscious. Where is the Ego at that moment? Who is the person meditating? Is it possible, that in such a state one is in fact in the only "real" form of existence, one that goes beyond dying and being born.

Why though, would a "spirit" take on a physical form? Why do we live and struggle? The most uplifting idea is that one lives to learn. Learn to be tolerant of others, learn to foresake one's Ego, learn to appreciate life in all its forms. It is the only concept that puts us all together, that unites us into one form of energy, and makes us part of everything. And then, all of a sudden, the question Who am I is no longer important. It becomes a question without meaning. For whatever happens to us,it seems, is a form of illusion, a temporary set of circumstances, probably chosen by us in the first place, for whatever reasons, and most probably unconsciously.

Ithink we create illusions, but believe ourselves to be real. It is altogether possible,that we too are an illusion.

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Readers are urged to contribute to this column and share their point of view. We cannot however, guarantee that all contributions will be published. Please limit your contribution to no more than 1000 words.

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